

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07

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FM AMEMBASSY SUVA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6073

INFO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

AOEMBASSY PORT MORESBY 165

HICOMTERPACIS SAIPAN MARIANA IS

CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON

C O N F I D E N T I A L SUVA 0556

FROM AMBASSADOR SELDEN

HICOM FOR STATUS LNO, CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, FJ

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S SEMI-ANNUAL VISIT TO FIJI

REF: SUVA 0550

1. RECENT DEFEAT OF ALLIANCE PARTY, ENSUING POLITICAL
TURMOIL, AND ALLIANCE AND OPPOSITION PLANS FOR FUTURE WERE
CHIEF PREOCCUPATIONS OF GOVERNMENT LEADERS WITH WHOM I
MET DURING SEMI-ANNUAL VISIT TO FIJI APRIL 20-27TH.

2. DURING MY CALL WITH CHARGE ON GOVERNOR GENERAL RATU
SIR GEORGE CAKOBAU IT OBVIOUS THIS LARGELY CEREMONIAL
FIGURE RELISHED ACTIVIST ROLE INTO WHICH HE WAS THRUST

BY OVERTURN OF ALLIANCE. HE WAS UNUSUALLY ANIMATED AS
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HE REVIEWED EVENTS LEADING UP TO HIS RESTORATION OF
ALLIANCE GOVERNMENT, ADDING WITH CHUCKLE HE ASKED
MINFINANCE STINSON FOR LARGE FEE IN RETURN FOR PRESERVING
LATTER'S JOB. GOVGEN, WHO ORDINARILY REFUSES DISCUSS
POLITICAL AFFAIRS, FREELY SPECULATED THAT FIJIAOVOTERS
WILL RETURN TO ALLIANCE FOLD AND PROVIDE MINORITY GOVERNMENT
WITH SUBSTANTIAL VICTORY WHEN NEXT ELECTION HELD.

HE PREDICTS THAT KEY FIGURE IN ALLIANCE DEFEAT, FIJIAN NATIONALIST PARTY LEADER SAKEASI BURADROKA, WILL BE SOUNDLY TROUNCED.

3. GOVGEN, WIDELY AND CORRECTELY REPORTED TO BE ANTI-INDIAN, WAS AT PAINS TO DISPROVE THIS, NOTING THAT METHODIST CHURCH IN WHICH CAKOBAU FAMILY LONG ACTIVE AND HIGHLY INFLUENTIAL HAS RECENTLY ELECTED INDIAN AS HEAD OF SYNOD.

4. I MET FOR MORE THAN AN HOUR WITH PRIMEMIN RATU SIR KAMISESE MARA. HE WAS RELAXED AND PLEASED AT RETURN TO POWER, WHICH HE CLAIMS WAS COMPLETE SURPRISE, DESCRIBED GOVGEN'S ACTION A TRIFLE CONDESCENDINGLY AS THAT OF "A PROPER GOVERNOR GENERLL". RATU MARA, WHOSE GOVERNMENT SURVIVED FIRST SESSION OF NEW PARLIAMENT CONVENED AFTER MY DEPARTURE (REFTEL), DESCRIBED STRATEGY FOR FUTURE AS INTENSIVE FENCEMENING FOR NUMBER OF MONTHS, FOLLOWED BY REQUEST TO GOVGEN TO DISSOLVE PARLIAMENT AND CALL NEW ELECTIONS AT TIME OF ALLIANCE'S CHOOSING. ALTERNATIVELY, HE MIGHT ASK THAT PARLIAMENT BE CONVENED AND MOVE VOTE OF CONFIDENCE. IF THIS LOST, AS SEEMS LIKELY (UNLESS ALL NFP MEMBERS ABSTAIN,), ELECTIONS WOULD ENSUE.

5. AMONG OTHER LEADING FIGURES WITH WHOM I DISCUSSED POLITICAL PROSPECTS WERE RATU SIR PENAIA GANILAU, DEPTYPRIMEMIN, AND MINFKINANCE CHARLES STINSON. DEPUTYPRIMEMIN EXPRESSED OPTIMISM FOR FUTURE, ASSERTING CONFIDENTIAL

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INDIAN OPPOSITION HAS NO REAL APPETITE FOR POWER, FIJIAN WHO SWUNG TO RACIST BUTADROKA'S PARTY DIS-ILLUSIONED AND STUNNED AT UNANTICIPATED DEFEAT OF RATU MARA, AND WILL RETURN TO FOLD. STINSON CITED OVERCONFIDENCE AND NEGLECT OF CONSTITUENTS BY LONG ENTRENCHED ALLIANCE AS HEAVILY CONTRIBUTING TO DEFEAT, AND STATED THAT ALL-OUT DRIVE TO REGAIN SUPPORT OF DEFECTING FIJIAN AND INDIAN MEMBERS OF ALLIANCE (FRIGHTENED INTO OPPOSITION ARMS BY FEAR OF RISING FIJIAN RACISM) NOW UNDERWAY. STINSON DEEPLY PESSIMISTIC REGARDING AVOIDANCE OF SERIOUS CIVIL DISTURBANCES IF ALLIANCE AGAIN DEFEATED, ADVOCATES IMMEDIATE ELECTIONS TO "CAPTURE SYMPATHY VOTE" OF FIJIAN APPALLED AT DEFEAT OF THEIR HIGHEST CHIEFS.

6. I VISITED FIJI NAVAL SQUARDON AND INSPECTED VESSELS WE PROVIDED. THESE REMAIN SOURCE OF CONSIDERABLE PRIDE, AND I AM HAPPY TO REPORT ARE KEPT IN IMMACULATE CONDITION. THEY ARE UNDERWAY FREQUENTLY - MOST RECENTLY

TO CLEAR AREA TO WEST OF VITI LEVU OF WORLD WAR II MINES AND BOMBS. COMMANDER OF SQUARDON REQUESTED WE PROVIDE NAVAL SUPPLY SPECIALIST TO ESTABLISH SQUARDON SUPPLY SYSTEM AND TO TRAIN FIJI NAVAL OFFICER IN THIS FUNCTION. DEPUTYPRIMEMIN EARLIER HAD ENQUIRED AS TO PROSPECT OF PURCHASE SPARE PARTS FOR MINESWEEPERS THROUGH FMS. UNSURE WHETHER THIS IN ADDITION TO PREVIOUS SPARE PARTS AGREEMENT. THESE QUERIES WILL BE SUBJECT OF SEPTTEL.

7. COMMENT: THROUGHOUT, I WAS WELCOMED WITH USUAWL CORDIALITY, AND RECEPTION I HOSTED WAS WELL ATTENDED. I HAVE RARELY SEEN RATUMARA AND GOVGEN IN SUCH "HAPPY WARRIOR" FRAME OF MIND. BOTH EXHILARATED AT PROSPECT OF POLITICAL STRUGGLE TO COME AND HOPED-FOR DEFEAT OF OPPOSITION. (THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT GOVGEN'S APPOINTMENT OF RATU MARA AS MINORITY PRIMEMIN HAS DONE MUCH TO HEAL LONGSTANDING BREACH BETWEEN THEM.)
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MOREOVER, SEC GEN OF OPPOSITION NFP, KARAM RAMRAKHA, WHILE PREDICTING CLINCHING VICTORY FOR HIS SIDE IN NEXT ELECTION, CLEARLY CONVEYED INDIAN DISARRAY AND APPREHENSION OVER HAVING TO GOVERN. BUTADROKA, HOWEVER, REMAINS SERIOUS THREAT AS GIFTED ORATOR PEDDLING RACIST LINE APPEALING TO MANY FIJIANS. THERE IS LITTLE AGREEMENT ON QUESTION OF WHETHER HIS JAILING ON CHARGES OF KINCITING RACIAL UNREST IS DISCREDITING OR MARTYRING HIM. HE HAS CERTAINLY HELPED SENSITIZE FIJIANS TO POLITICS TO UNPRECEDENTED EXTENT, AND WILL CONTINUE TO PLAY A PART IN EVENTS AS THEY UNFOLD IN MONTHS TO COME.
SELDEN

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